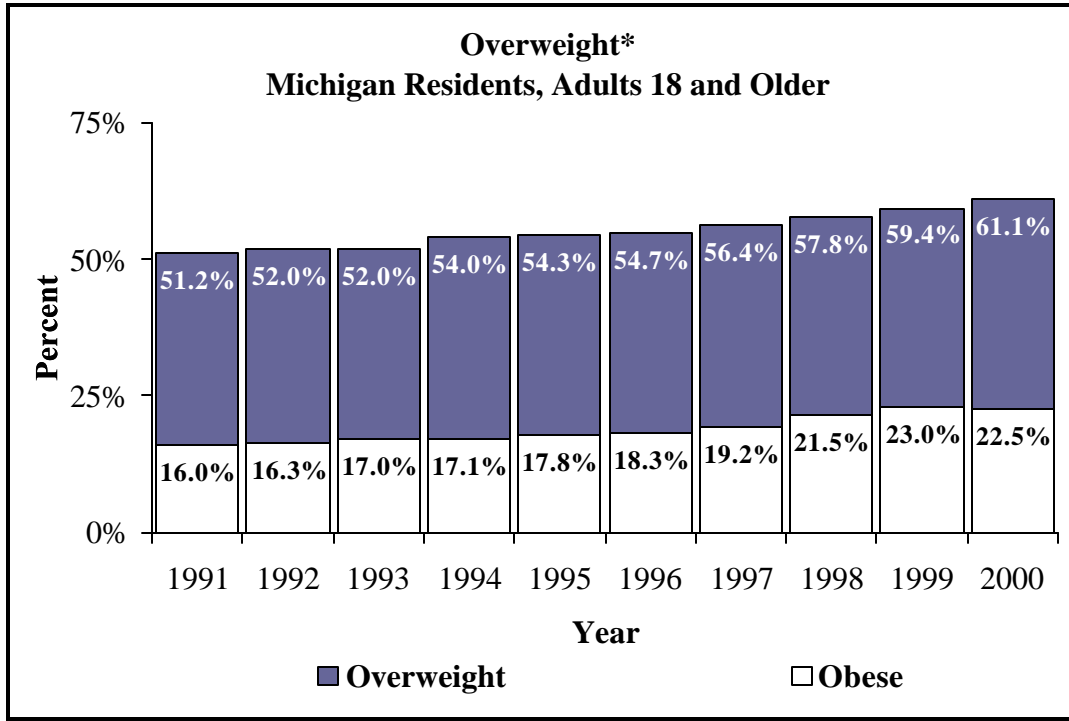


Focused Indicators Health Risk Behaviors *Overweight*



* See Technical Notes Section for definition change.

Source: Bureau of Epidemiology, MDCH

How are we doing?

Overweight is mainly the result of poor diet, lack of physical activity, environmental barriers to achieve healthy behaviors, genetics, or any combination of these factors. Poor diet and lack of physical activity are second only to smoking as causes of preventable death. Someone who is overweight is more likely to die prematurely than a person in a healthy weight range.

The 2000 Michigan Behavioral Risk Factor Survey (BRFSS) indicates that 61.1 percent of Michigan adults are overweight. Among all Michigan adults, 22.5 percent are obese. The proportion of the adult population that is overweight has been steadily increasing from 51.2 percent in 1991 to 61.1 percent in 2000. Survey respondents are asked for their height and weight, which is then used to calculate a body mass index (BMI).

How does Michigan compare to other states?

The proportion of adults who are overweight has been increasing in both Michigan and the nation, but Michigan has among the highest rates. In 2000, the prevalence of adults overweight in Michigan was 61.1 percent while the median among all the states was 57.1 percent.

How are different populations affected?

The proportion of Michigan adults who were overweight, including obese, increased with age up until 75 years and then decreased. African Americans were more likely to be overweight and obese than Caucasians. In addition, adults with less than a high school education were more likely to be overweight and obese than those who had graduated from college.

For more information about adult health risk behaviors, visit the Michigan Department of Community Health Web site at www.michigan.gov/mdch.

What other information is important to know?

Overweight and obesity have been linked to several serious medical conditions, including diabetes, heart disease, high blood pressure, and stroke. They are also associated with higher rates of certain types of cancer.

Recommendations for reducing overweight should include consultation with medical professionals; a diet low in fat, rich in high-fiber and complex-carbohydrate foods; and an increase in moderate physical activity. Overweight individuals frequently do not eat enough fruits, vegetables, and whole-grain foods. About one in five respondents in the 2000 BRFSS survey ate the recommended five or more servings of fruits and vegetables daily.

Moreover, one in five adults reported that they did not participate in any physical activity during their leisure time in the past month. A widespread increase in moderate physical activity, such as brisk walking, raking leaves, or playing volleyball for 30 minutes a day, could help prevent the development of overweight in a large proportion of the population.

For individuals who are overweight, increased physical activity and improved diet can decrease the risk of developing a chronic disease even without weight loss. A modest weight loss of 5 to 10 percent will decrease risk further. For some people, this is as little as 5 to 10 pounds.

What is the Department of Community Health doing to affect this indicator?

The department is actively working to decrease the percent of Michigan residents who are overweight by offering educational programs that address nutrition and physical activity.

In cooperation with the Governor's Council on Physical Fitness, Health and Sports, and the Michigan Fitness Foundation, the department has sponsored the development and distribution of a model physical education curriculum for Michigan schools encouraging lifelong physical activity. A network of regional physical fitness councils operates to promote innovative community-based physical activity programs across the state. The department is working closely with the Michigan Department of Education to implement new consensus recommendations for schools to promote healthy weight in students.

The department is working with communities through local health agencies and Michigan State University extension to help assess the extent to which people are able to be active and make healthy food choices. In addition, the 5 A Day for Better Health Program works with local communities to promote fruit and vegetable consumption in the context of a low fat, healthy diet. The Cardiovascular Disease Prevention Program helps communities focus on healthy eating and increased physical activity through schools, churches, and health care systems.

A Centers for Disease Control and Prevention grant also is helping Michigan focus attention on obesity in African American women. Through community-driven strategic planning and a pilot intervention, strategies will be implemented in communities with higher minority populations to assist African American women in becoming more active and eating healthier.

Seniors are also a priority for the department. Local senior centers across the state promote and sponsor fitness programs, including walking clubs for the elderly. In addition, the 5 A Day for Better Health Program is being expanded to the state's 450 senior nutrition sites. Included in these activities is a training program offered to providers of nutrition services for the elderly on healthful menu planning and preparation. In addition, the department is actively promoting an initiative on nutrition, exercise and chronic disease. This initiative will address the issue of obesity and how it affects diabetes, heart disease, and arthritis.

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